

what next? Principled citizens whatever their political party affiliation should be appalled by the new lows to which partisan media companies are stooping. For all the popular outcry over "liberal bias" at the New York Times and "Rathergate" at CBS, the shocking incidents are occurring at the Murdoch-controlled Fox TV, the Clear Channel radio stations, and now, perhaps the most offensive, Sinclair Broadcasting. Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. Coming on top of their refusal to air Nightline when Ted Koppel read the names of US soldiers killed in Iraq, this sure looks like a pattern of media bias-- blocking out facts that don't fit their views and pushing facts (or simply allegations) that don't. One negative likely outcome that has drawn some comment is that people simply go to the medium that tells them what they already think. Others, perhaps less informed or less opinionated, are incapable of distinguishing between objective and distorted reporting and give up, turning back to the world series, sitcoms, etc. Much as the right-wing might like to see the decline in civic engagement and popular literacy on political issues continue, such an outcome would be unhealthy to our democracy, to say the least.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. Please don't let these travesties continue. Thank you.